

SPEECH GIVEN BY DR JOHN GRANT IN HONOUR OF NANCY JOYCE'S  
RETIREMENT

This evening we have met to pay a tribute to Nancy, our guest of honour, and to mark our appreciation for her services given to the Spinal Unit at RNSH over a period of some 22 years.

Nancy Joyce joined the spinal injuries unit in 1961 and thus began what I would like to recall as the Joyce era. (history)

The first two eras of the spinal injuries unit differed very considerably from those of 1961 - 83. I think they were both earmarked by the sisters who controlled the unit in the first place - Sister Reid who really played a part in the development of the unit, now hardly recognised, probably being overshadowed by the rather dominant personality of Sister Lamberton who came to the Unit with the authority of a senior sister. Although this authority is no longer witnessed in our hospitals it stood out as a mark of the times.

These two people left their impression on the unit and provided a situation that was going to be hard to follow. I make mention of them and their eras of note, to stress the contribution of Nancy Joyce who was set a standard of no mean measure to live up to. It may be of interest to look for a very brief moment at the background of her upbringing as a nurse. She was trained in general nursing at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (1946-50) and whilst I am not in the game of giving secrets away, her training covered my period as a resident and registrar at the same hospital.

It might be said at this time that those were the days where discipline, a 4 year training programme, and a more total application of the individual's time to their career were demanded. The effects of this training and the end product with all its benefits to those who came under her care will have been obvious to those who have been patients in our Spinal Unit.

The Royal North Shore first had its introduction to Nancy when she began her obstetric training (1950-1) and following this she undertook various positions as a trained sister.

In 1961 we first saw her as Sister in Charge of the paraplegic unit as it was then fondly known.



In 1964 we lost her when she travelled to the U.K. to the .... of spinal injuries at Stoke Mandeville, and following this post-graduate training she observed other units, both in England and the U.S.A. and Canada, to return again to the control of the ward.

Again in 1969 we lost her whilst she undertook her diploma of nursing administration at the N.S.W. College of Nursing.

Finally in 1970 she returned to continue as Sister in Charge until her retirement late last year.

The Joyce era has been marked by many changes which have placed great demands on Nancy, who has been responsible for the provision of a standard of nursing not to be outclassed anywhere in the world - this maintenance of standards and nursing discipline is something of which she can be justly proud. In a world of medicine where today machines, gadgets, chemical tests, and specialised investigations play a seemingly greater part, and the patient can easily become a commodity, it is very possible to forget that in some subjects - and spinal injuries is one - basic nursing with first principles of anatomy and physiology and compassion are, and always will be, the most important component of care. Sister Joyce has never forgotten that these are so.

I mentioned that Nancy joined the "old paraplegic unit" in the cottages - now almost forgotten by most and never seen by many. Here she was responsible for the development of an atmosphere of a unique nature where patients/<sup>who</sup> felt no doubt at times that they had more than their special injuries to cope with, were soon aware of the warmth and feeling and friendship that came from her supervision.

For those who passed through the unit there was always a warm welcome when they returned to Joyce's Trading Post.

*Completed. added*

The move from the old to the new unit, its planning and setting up were very much her responsibility, and the transfer to a larger area - more beds and a new facility, took place under her command with ease.

Whilst in many ways we no longer have our feet on the ground, Nancy transferred



to the 7th floor much of what we had developed in the old cottages, and has maintained a service which I think is equal to any in the world.

The care of a person who has been rendered paraplegic or quadriplegic is something that requires the total involvement of the staff in all aspects of the person's life.

To suffer from appendicitis or such like illness is simply an incident, but to become paraplegic or quadriplegic involves a new way of life. The nurse who is truly involved is totally involved. It is here, when we look at Nancy's career, that we see the day did not finish at the end of the shift. Nancy has been involved in all aspects of the problem.

Sports days at the RNSH have seen her involving her mother and others in the spirit of the games, as well as caring for all sportsmen and women, guests and so forth.

She has accompanied teams of sportsmen and women on international tours.

To this can be added her many years as a member of the Board of Directors of the P & Q Association of N.S.W., A POSITION I hope she will continue to occupy for a long time yet.

There is much that I could add to what I have said but I will leave it to John Walsh and Jean McPhail to speak on behalf of the patients and staff.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that in the closing of this era we can look back on a period of unique service given by Nancy, a service made possible by her devotion to a cause and given by a person with a deep and sincere Christian faith. Hers will be an act that will be hard to follow.

From my own point of view I will miss her services and as one who really knows that the care and welfare of the spinal injured patients rests in the hands of the nursing and paramedical staff, I say along with all here tonight, a sincere thank you and to you our best wishes.